

Master plan will guide MST completion

The state parks system will be seeking ideas from partners, stakeholders and the public as part of a master planning process underway to guide completion of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail.

The 1,000-mile trail corridor will ultimately link Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the coast. Nearly two thirds of the cross-state route has been completed as a continuous, off-road trail experience, offering opportunities for hiking, biking and horseback riding through some of North Carolina's most scenic landscapes. Where the trail has not yet been completed, detours along secondary roads allow ambitious hikers to complete the trek.

A completed master plan will lead toward official designation of remaining portions by setting priorities for completing trail sub-sections. It will also unify regional planning efforts and identify potential new partners and funding strategies. The state parks system has hired Planning Communities, LLC to prepare a detailed master plan by late 2015 at a contract price of \$120,000 supported through the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

A Planning Communities Website linked from www.ncparks.gov offers a route to get involved in the planning effort, with updates on planned regional stakeholder meetings to be held in early 2015.

A unit of the state parks system, the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail is envisioned as the backbone of a network of regional hiking, paddling and multi-use trails across the state, which could be easily connected to local trail and greenway efforts.



O'Neal new state parks chief of operations

Adrian O'Neal, a 21-year veteran park ranger, park superintendent and district superintendent, has been promoted to chief of operations for the state parks system. He succeeds Mike Lambert, who resigned earlier this year to assume a similar position in Connecticut.

O'Neal will be responsible for park operations, resource management, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for the state's system of 36 state parks, four state recreation areas and 20 state natural areas, as well as other system units covering more than 218,000 acres.

O'Neal is a native of Dunn and graduated from North Carolina State University in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in parks, recreation and tourism management. He began his career with the state parks system in 1993 as a ranger at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park and later served at Carolina Beach State Park.

In 2003, O'Neal was promoted to superintendent of Lake Waccamaw State Park, and in 2004, became east district superintendent.

Continued Other Side



NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION
NC DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES



Volunteers help at Vade Mecum Springs property

Armed with dustpans, mops and enthusiasm, volunteers descended on the Vade Mecum Springs property at Hanging Rock State Park in October on a workday organized by Friends of Sauratown Mountains.

The goal was to begin cleaning the property's lodge and begin upgrading rough trails on the 716-acre property. The group also began the tedious job of hauling away more than 100 old mattresses from the lodge and nearby cabins.

The Vade Mecum Springs property – operated until last year as the Camp Sertoma 4-H Education Center – was transferred to the state parks system from North Carolina State University through legislation. Its operations will be integrated into those of the state park. Along with the lodge and cabins, facilities included a campground complex and access to the Dan River, nine miles of mountain biking trails, a recreation hall, swimming pool, chapel, athletic fields and equestrian barn and trails.

Friends of Sauratown Mountains – which supports both Hanging Rock and Pilot Mountain state parks – immediately began recruiting volunteers to help with the project.

The Stokes County landmark has a long history. Entrepreneurs John Sparks and J. Cicero Tise developed Vade Mecum Springs at the turn of the 20th Century as a resort revolving around the healthful Moore Springs.



Trust Fund Authority allocates \$7.6 million for key projects

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority approved \$4.5 million for maintenance and construction projects and \$3.1 million for land acquisitions in the North Carolina state parks system at its Feb. 5 meeting at William B. Umstead State Park.

Board members approved \$1.06 million to be used in combination with other funds to acquire mainland property at Hammocks Beach State Park in Onslow County. The expansion of the mainland property has been a critical need for over 30 years to provide visitor facilities for additional environmental education and recreational opportunities.

The authority allocated \$494,400 to be used in the purchase of 335 acres at Chimney Rock State Park to provide public access to the World's Edge section of the park and several tracts to protect the Bat Cave area on the park's west side. It also approved \$155,500 in partial funding for a critical tract on Buckquarter Creek at Eno River State Park.

An additional \$1.4 million was approved for acquiring critical properties at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area and South Mountains State Park.

Construction and maintenance funds approved by the board will be used for building, infrastructure, trail and exhibit repairs, dredging of the channel allowing access to Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park, sewer improvements at Pilot Mountain, development of a high-hazard dam emergency action plan and construction of tent-trailer camping at Lake James State Park.

The North Carolina General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund in 1994 to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches. The Parks and Recreation Authority, a nine-member appointed board, was also created to allocate funds from PARTF to the state parks and to the grants program for local governments.

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